

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Sunday Morning Bible Class

Formula of Concord Series

Article 6 – The Third Function of the Law

The Question at Issue:

- A) The law should be urged upon (preached to) Christians
- B) The law should not be urged upon (preached to) Christians

Why It Matters

- 1) The Bible identifies three purposes, uses, or functions of the law: curb, mirror, and guide/rule. To abandon the 3rd use is to throw the understanding of countless passages into question and to deny that Christians retain the sinful flesh with which they were born.
- 2) . To deny the guide function of the law is to deny that our sinful flesh continues to taint and cloud our understanding of God's will, or that we are somehow perfect and holy in our understanding and conduct prior to the Resurrection.
- 3) . To abandon the preaching of the law to Christians would diminish the value of Christ as Savior and encourage Christians to do whatever seems right in their own minds.

What the Bible Teaches

1) Those who have been converted and brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ have been freed from the curse and coercion of the law. That does not mean that they are then without the law, or opposed to it. On the contrary they have been redeemed precisely so that they should exercise themselves day and night in the law - just as Adam and Eve, prior to the fall, did not live without the law of God. That law was written on their hearts.

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree").

Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Psalms 119:1-2 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD! ² Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!

Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

2) The law is to be preached and diligently applied both to the unregenerate and to believers.

Acts 20:27-28 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..."

3) The regeneration and renewal of the Christian is incomplete in this world. Those who have been born again are in a constant state of war with their sinful flesh, which clings to them until death. Because of the old Adam, which corrupts their intellect, will, and all their powers, it is necessary for the law of God to continually light their way, lest they seek self-decreed paths and self-chosen acts of serving God that are actually not in harmony with this will. It is further necessary to keep the old Adam in check so that the sinful side of the Christian does not go his self-willed way.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Romans 7:18-23 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ²¹ ¶ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

4) The distinction between the works of the law and the fruit of the Spirit is that works done according to the law are works of the law as long as they are extorted from people under the coercion of punishment and threat of the law.

5) Fruits of the Spirit are those works which the Holy Spirit, living in the Christian, works through the regenerated and which the regenerated perform in so far as they are reborn and do them as spontaneously as if they knew of no command, threat or reward. In that sense the children of God live in the law and walk according to it.

Romans 7:22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

6) Therefore the law remains one and the same law, both for the regenerate and unregenerate; namely, the unchangeable will of God. The difference, as far as obedience is concerned, rests exclusively with man. The unregenerated man does what is demanded of him by the law under coercion and unwillingly. The believer, without any coercion and with a willing spirit, in so far as he is reborn, does what no threat of the law could ever have wrung from him.

What the Bible Rejects

1) That the law is not to be urged (in the manner and measure described above) upon Christians, but only upon unbelievers and the impenitent.